

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANTANA 00669 190914Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 OES-07 EB-08 CG-00 DOTE-00
HA-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 NSC-05 SS-15 /073 W
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R 190810Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0416
INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLOS CGEN EWWT MA TW
SUBJ: ROC SHIP DETAINED IN MADAGASCAR

REFS: (A) ANT A004 (NOTAL), (B) STATE 088683

1. PER PARA 3 REF B, EMBASSY SENT DIP NOTE TO FOREIGN
MINISTRY APRIL 13 INQUIRING ABOUT WELFARE OF ORIENT LONDON'S
CREW ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS. HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED
OFFICIAL REPLY BUT DIRECTOR OF BILATERAL AFFAIRS HAS TOLD
EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE THE FOLLOWING: CREW MEMBERS MUST
REMAIN ON BOARD EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL TRIP TO SHORE (TAMATAVE)
UNDER HEAVY GUARD. THEY ARE RECEIVING FOOD FROM A LOCAL
SHIPPING AGENT. EXCEPT FOR THE ONE DEAD CREW MEMBER, THE
CREW IS APPARENTLY IN GOOD HEALTH. THE DIRECTOR OF BILATERAL
AFFAIRS IS STILL WAITING FOR MORE PRECISE DETAILS, AND ONE LOCAL
EMPLOYEE BELIVES THAT WE WILL EVENTUALLY RECEIVE A FORMAL
REPLY TO OUR DIP NOTE.

2. CHARGE BARRETT VISITED TAMATAVE IN LATE MARCH AND REPORTED
AS FOLLOWS IN PARA 11 REF A, QUOTE: THE LATEST SUBJECT IS
THE CARGO SHIP ORIENT LONDON WHICH WAS BROUGHT DOWN FROM
DIEGO SUAREZ THREE WEEKS AGO. THIS TAIWANESE-CREWED SHIP,
OF DOUBTFUL OWNERSHIP AND SAILING ON EXPIRED PANAMANIAN
REGISTRY, WAS TAKEN INTO DIEGO SUAREZ LAST JUNE AFTER IT
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ENTERED MALAGASY WATERS IN DISTRESS OFF THE ISLAND OF NOSSY BE.
IT WAS CARRYING RHODESIAN CHROME, LOADED IN MOZAMBIQUE, AND
CERTAIN CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SHIP AND THE MALAGASY SHORE AROUSED
THE SUSPICION OF MALAGASY AUTHORITIES. AN ENGLISH SALVAGE
CAPTAIN, WHO BROUGHT THE ORIENT LONDON INTO DIEGO, IS IN JAIL
BECAUSE OF HIS CONNECTION WITH THE SHIP, AND HIS ATTORNEY, WHO
CAME FROM LONDON TO FREE HIM, HAS ALSO BEEN JAILED. RUMOR IS

THAT THERE ARE ARMS SUSPECTED TO BE UNDER THE CHROME ORE. THE SHIP SQUATS LIKE AN OBSCENITY IN THE ANCHORAGE, AT A FIVE DEGREE LIST, IN FULL VIEW OF THE WHOLE TOWN. THE ORE IS BEING LIGHTERED OFF AND INFORMED OPINION IS THAT IT WILL TAKE OVER A YEAR TO UNLOAD AT THIS RATE AND THAT THE ORE WILL BE SOLD TO NORTH KOREA. ALL DAY SMALL BOATS ARE GOING FORTH BETWEEN IT AND THE OIRT PORT, OSTENSIBLY TO SERVICE AND RELIEVE THE 40-MAN ARMED GUARD ABOARD. DOMINATING THE HARBOR BY ITS CENTRAL LOCATION, THE ORIENT LONDON IS THE SUBJECT OF CONSTANT SPECULATION IN...TAMATAVE. UNQUOTE.SMITH

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NNN

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